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SUBJECT: ECOSOC 2009 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION

REF: Geneva 582

¶1. SUMMARY: This cable reports the results of the coordination, operational activities, and humanitarian affairs segments of the 2009 Substantive Session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which followed the high-level segment (reftel). The highlight of the three segments was the July 22 adoption, after extensive negotiations, of a draft resolution entitled "Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations". The resolution made important gains by including language on humanitarian access and sexual and gender-based violence, while avoiding unacceptable language on the occupied territories. Also notable was the July 22 adoption by consensus of the operational activities segment resolution entitled "Progress in the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of Operational Activities of the United Nations System" (E/2009/L.18). For the first time, the G77 agreed to language in this resolution acknowledging that earmarked funding for operational activities can take various forms, and may complement non-earmarked funding. This positive development should facilitate ongoing General Assembly negotiations on System Wide Coherence. As in previous years, notwithstanding several worthwhile panel discussions, the coordination segment remained ECOSOC's weak link at the 2009 Substantive Session. Although adopted by consensus, the two resolutions on agenda items discussed during the coordination segment did little to advance the segment's stated purpose of improving coordination of UN system activities.
END SUMMARY.

Coordination Segment (July 10 - 14)

¶2. The U.S. joined consensus on two coordination segment resolutions, both adopted on July 31. They are entitled "The role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration on the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development adopted at the high-level segment of the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council" (E/2009/L.44) and "Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16" (E/2009/L.32). The former resolution's stated purpose is to offer policy guidance to the UN system on implementing the 2008 ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration, based on a Secretariat report.

¶3. The original draft of E/2009/L.32, contributed by the Secretariat, proposed lengthening the periodicity of the annual report on the topic of the resolution to four years, in order to encourage a more in depth and substantive treatment of the issue. However, the G77 was unwilling to endorse this idea, so the resolution as adopted only decides to further review in 2010 the periodicity of the Secretariat report on the role of ECOSOC in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major UN conferences and summits, and requests

Secretariat recommendations on the issue of periodicity.

14. As in previous years, the Coordination Segment featured several worthwhile panel discussions or dialogues. On July 10, the Executive Secretaries of ECOSOC's Regional Commissions provided a brief overview on the economic situation in their respective regions in a three-hour dialogue. The speakers focused on regional impacts of, and solutions to, the global financial crisis, in particular related to the health implications for different sectors of the population. The Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ECOWAS) noted that unemployment in Arab countries remains among the highest in the world, leading to an increased rate of mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence and crime among youth. In the Asia Pacific region, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) predicted up to 24.8 million people could lose their jobs as result of the economic crisis. Large increases in budget deficits and national debts threaten the future of health spending, while putting maternal, infant and child mortality in danger.

15. At a July 13 panel discussion on the Role of the UN system in implementing the 2008 ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration, which focused on sustainable development, ILO Director General Juan Somavia noted there has been a shift in the U.S. position on green growth, pointing to the new administration's efforts in the reduction of carbon emission. UNDP Administrator Helen Clark complimented the G8 for its recent reaffirmation of its commitment to increase aid to Africa. Clark said the UNDP would mobilize resources on a case-by-case basis in order to achieve the most effective development impact. With respect to the issue of increasing the coherence in the responses of UN bodies, the panelists conveyed a hopeful message by emphasizing that UN organizations are coming

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together in ways never tried before. WTO Deputy Director-General Harsha Vardhana Singh noted that both short and long-term coordination are required between different sectors to find a comprehensive solution to overcoming the crisis.

Operational Activities Segment (July 15 - 17)

16. On July 22, the U.S. joined consensus on resolution entitled "Progress in the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of Operational Activities of the United Nations System" (E/2009/L.18). The resolution is notable in that, for the first time, the G77 agreed to language acknowledging that earmarked funding for operational activities can take various forms, and may compliment non-earmarked funding. This positive development should facilitate ongoing General Assembly negotiations on System Wide Coherence, which are addressing the issue of "appropriate proportional targets" for earmarked vs. non-earmarked voluntary donor contributions. The ECOSOC resolution also notes continuing efforts to strengthen the UN resident coordinator system and implement "Delivering as One UN" pilot projects in eight program countries and calls for future progress reports and evaluations of the challenges and achievements of both initiatives.

17. Also on July 22, the Council adopted by consensus a resolution entitled "Appointment of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund" (E/2009/L.19), as well as a decision submitted by the El Salvadoran Vice President of the Council entitled "Operational activities for development" (E/2009/L.15). The resolution, submitted by New Zealand and Norway, regularizes the appointment of the Executive Director of the UNFPA in accordance with a recommendation of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board contained in document E/2008/35. The decision recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to postpone, to its sixty-seventh session, the submission of the comprehensive analysis of resolution 62/208, the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR). The decision reflects General Assembly resolution 63/232, which extended the periodicity of the TCPR to four years.

18. The U.S. delegation delivered a statement in the general

discussion of the operational activities segment noting the U.S. commitment to working with the UN system to deliver assistance to people in need throughout the world and reiterating the importance of producing, measuring, and reporting results as a tool for achieving greater effectiveness and efficiency.

¶9. The Council deferred consideration of the report on "South-South Cooperation for Development" contained in document A/63/39 to its 2010 substantive session.

Humanitarian Affairs Segment (July 20 - 22)

¶10. Following extensive negotiations, the Council adopted an informal text entitled "Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" by consensus on July 22. The consensual adoption of the resolution came after last year's divisive vote on the same resolution in which the U.S. joined the EU and Moldova in abstaining. Despite the inclusion of language on occupied territories, the resolution makes important gains by including language on humanitarian access and sexual and gender-based violence.

¶11. The two issues which brought the humanitarian resolution to a vote last year, humanitarian access and occupied territories, remained the main points of contention during this year's negotiations. The U.S., EU, CANZ group, Korea, Costa Rica and Mexico led efforts to include strong language on access in this year's resolution, arguing that access is a cornerstone of every effective humanitarian response. Syria and Palestine also championed the cause of humanitarian access, clearly intended as a reference to Israeli policies vis-a-vis Gaza. These delegations also argued for language on occupied territories to be included in this year's resolution.

¶12. During the negotiations in New York, Syria introduced agreed language on occupied territories from the 2004 ECOSOC humanitarian resolution. The 2004 resolution had been adopted by consensus, but the U.S., Israel, CANZ and EU argued that the language on occupied territories was not balanced as it only focused on the obligations of States and not other parties. Lengthy negotiations in New York could not resolve this difficult issue or other matters including humanitarian access, sexual/gender-based violence and the role of regional organizations.

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¶13. The co-facilitators (Australia and Indonesia) issued a facilitators' text on July 10 due to the inability of member states to agree on a text in New York. Syria broke silence on the occupied territories paragraph of the facilitators' text with the U.S. also voicing objections. Intensive, last-minute negotiations in Geneva between the U.S., Israeli and the Palestinian delegation finally led to a compromise formulation of the occupied territories paragraph acceptable to all sides, paving the way for the consensus adoption of the text on July 22.

¶14. After adoption of the resolution, Syria gave an explanation of position claiming it had been extremely flexible during negotiations. Syria stated that it did not block adoption of the resolution even though it had serious concerns about the "politicization" of the document. Referring to paragraphs 13 and 14, Syria claimed that the agreed text "put the aggressor and the victim on an equal footing" in the context of occupied territories and undermined the main responsibility of the State to protect and assist civilians in occupied territories. Terming Gaza a "big prison", Syria called on the international community to pressure Israel to allow unhindered access to the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel did not respond to this statement.

Remarks by USG Holmes and U.S. Statement

¶15. In his remarks to the opening session of the segment, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency

Relief Coordinator John Holmes discussed chronic problems and new challenges. In terms of chronic problems, he highlighted restricted humanitarian access and attacks against humanitarian workers. Holmes catalogued new threats generated by the combined effects of what he termed "global mega-trends": climate change, chronic poverty, the food and financial crises, water and energy scarcity, migration, population growth, urbanization and pandemics. He stated that these trends have exacerbated vulnerability on a massive scale, requiring a robust response from the humanitarian community.

¶16. The U.S. delegation delivered a statement during the general discussion of the humanitarian affairs segment emphasizing the U.S. commitment to supporting humanitarian relief efforts, and the importance of the UN in that process. The statement is available on the USUN website.

¶17. Several panel discussions took place during the humanitarian segment, including events on "Coordination in the transition phase between emergency relief and sustainable recovery" and "Addressing the impact of current global challenges and trends on the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance". In addition, on July 21, the Secretariat's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) conducted a mid-year briefing on OCHA's consolidated appeals. According to OCHA, the 2009 consolidated appeal for all country action plans is USD 9.5 billion, up from USD 6.5 billion in 2008. However, there is a USD 4.8 billion gap between project funding need and current funding provisions. Worldwide, OCHA reports there are 43 million people in need, compared to 28 million last year. Countries with the largest unmet funding needs include Sudan (USD 916 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (USD 505 million), Zimbabwe (USD 458 million), and Somalia (USD 428 million). The U.S. government continues to be the largest donor to the CAP, contributing over USD 3 billion in 2008.

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